

Subject: Ballistics
 From: Daniel Ellsberg
 To: [illegible]
 Re: [illegible] on the removal
 of US offensive forces from Cuba

1. In the meeting this morning, there was frequent emphasis on the importance of focusing continually in our planning upon the objective: "The missiles must be removed." There was no mention of the possibility or desirability of defining that objective: "The missiles must go by...", or even, "The missiles must go soon," let alone, "immediately." There are disadvantages in exhibiting such a time constraint, either in our planning assumptions or in US declaratory policy.

2. To the extent that planners do succeed in focusing upon a single, stated main objective, shortcomings in that statement may have a distorting effect on their work: e.g., upon their notions of the range of alternatives that may be considered of roughly comparable effectiveness. In this case, the statement leaves open the inference that the U.S. is indifferent to the speed of removal of the missiles, to the starting date or to the length of the process, so long as they are removed eventually. Are we?

3. To specify a particular date by which decisive actions must have been taken to remove the missiles is to sacrifice US flexibility of action. But is that a disadvantage? Can we afford to allow ourselves as much flexibility of action as was implicit

...and the fact that the U.S. is not in a position to remove the missiles by the date specified in the statement.
That

In the proposals discussed in morning? How can we generate the Foreign anxiety that we are on the verge of decisive unilateral action--stressed by Kitzendash--if in fact, in our private planning, we have set up no scheduled serving to remind us of time urgency, no criteria to tell us that the time of decision has arrived?

5. For example, the aspect of the inexorability in its effects of the POL blockade was always emphasized: "It tightens a noose around their necks; it sets the clock ticking." But the significance of the length of that process was not discussed after I arrived. Would we be just as sanguine about the effectiveness of that move if the Cubans had 6 months supplies on hand (the process would still be "inexorable")? Is 60 to 90 days--which, as I understand it, is when the alarm should actually ring on this particular clock--just the right amount of time for a process putting pressure on the Cubans: or is it too much for our purposes? To answer that, we must face the question more directly whether our "purposes" include a time dimension or not.

Can we really plan to wait 60-90 days for the Cubans or Soviets to decide to comply with our demands? (Shouldn't they be able to decide to comply with our demands? Shouldn't they be able to decide to comply with our demands?)

6. Of course, as someone remarked, the Russians may cooperatively keep up our momentum. Or they may not. Our statements and our actions (not, by the way, our plans) either will communicate to the Soviets/Cubans that they must take immediate steps to comply, to avert U.S. unilateral action: or they will communicate something

...that we tell the Soviets and Cubans to leave
their words and our acts? I would argue that it does not
fit our objectives for them to hear: The U.S. has said up to
now that the missiles must go eventually. That the
information may have virtually no impact upon them. What I
suspect they are listening to learn is: Do the U.S. intend to
allow us enough time for us to change their mind? The discussion
this morning--taking only what was actually said, not what may
have been implicit in some minds--might well have been reassuring
on that crucial point, if they had heard it. Our own private
sense of determination that we will take action to remove the
missiles "if, in the end, it proves inescapable"--even if this
private "decision" were communicated perfectly to the Soviets--
could convey to them very little need for prompt action on their
part if they suspected that we had placed in our paths very few
obstacles to escape from that onerous task on any particular day.
In short, I argue the importance of setting a clock ticking
for us, and one with a much shorter alarm date than that of the
POL blockade.

7. A plausible criterion for the time-span that would be
allowed the Soviets/Cubans (and the USI), ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~
~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~, is the time we now estimate it would take for the
missile force now on Cuba to reach full operational status.
A reasonable public basis (and a sound private one) for our
need to put a short time-limit on their compliance is:

...to fulfill our commitment to prevent the outbreak of a significant offensive threat to nations of the Western Hemisphere. We do not intend to withdraw from that commitment to a position which would force us to negotiate over the withdrawal of an established, fully operational force, or force us to remove unilaterally an operational force in the face of nuclear threats against ourselves or third parties."

3. Proposal: that the US primary objective, both in planning and in public statements, should specify a short time limit for the Soviets and/or Cubans to be well embarked upon the process of dismantling and destroying or embarking their missiles and equipment and offensive bombers: e.g., one week. A limit, at least in planning, should also be set for the completion of that task. Moreover, to support that objective, planning schedules for the various tracks should specify dates for decisive U.S. actions to remove the offensive forces (naturally, events may either speed up or delay such action; I still suggest that it is important that at any given time current planning include a specific, and not far off, date at for the alarm to ring on the U.S. clock). That limit should be announced soon: e.g., today or tomorrow. During the interval, such preparatory actions as massive overflights over the entire island might be taken: for reconnaissance, but even more, to be seen (and perhaps to drop leaflets). *Specific action for the Soviets to begin to take to remove missiles*

4. I have not tried to indicate all the pros and cons of this proposal, in particular the possible disadvantages, or to indicate

the myriad planning and preparatory actions that such a tight schedule would impose upon the U.S., or the risks involved.

I wished merely to advance the argument, which I feel strongly (and with which Harry Rowen concurs), that we cannot afford to relieve ourselves of such pressures: for to do so is to

relieve our antagonists. We should be most wary in that

we do not unconsciously make a bargain ~~or~~ with ourselves to

square ourselves the risks and anxieties of forcing the pace:

a conscious sense of satisfaction at having "reached a decision"

to take military action against the sites "if and when we have"

to" could really be founded on our having promised ourselves,

unconsciously, that we will not take such an action in the

coming week: when it is most anticipated. The consequences,

in the course of this coming week, of proving that anticipation

unfounded could be fatal to our ultimate objective.